

IN THE CLAIMS

Pursuant to 37 CFR §1.121(c), the following listing, including the text of the claims in the amendment document will serve to replace all prior versions of the claims in the application, and incorporates the amendments made by this Paper.

Please amend claims 32, 33 and 36 through 39 as follows:

Claims 1 - 31. (Canceled)

1 32. (Currently Amended) A method for processing and separating flexible, flat
2 objects during product feed, comprised of:

3 continuously feeding flexible objects to a transfer module in an essentially
4 regular imbricate formation as the flexible objects fluently advance along a guide
5 within said transfer module with leading lower edges of the flexible objects supported
6 on a surface of the guide and with a trailing edge of each flexible object lying over the
7 leading lower edge of a subsequent flexible object;

8 erecting the flexible objects during said product feed along the guide into
9 obliquely standing positions with leading upper edges of the flexible objects exhibiting
10 inclinations opposite to orientations of the flexible objects when initially erected; and

11 accommodating separation of the flexible objects from the obliquely
12 standing positions with leading upper edges of the flexible objects exhibiting
13 inclinations opposite to orientations of the flexible objects when erected, in a defined
14 number from the flexible objects remaining supported by the guide[[], and]];

15 ~~conveyance away from the transfer module by a conveyor~~ conveying the flexible
16 objects away from the transfer module using a gripper to select a single flexible object
17 or a predetermined number of flexible objects,

18 wherein the erecting step is performed by first accelerating the speed of
19 the flexible objects through the guide and then decelerating the speed of the
20 flexible objects further along the guide.

1 33. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 32, comprised of the
2 flexible objects, during said advance of the flexible objects over the surface of the
3 guide, ~~the flexible objects are~~ being continuously rotated from the ~~orientation~~
4 orientations of the flexible objects in said obliquely standing position ~~is~~ and inclined
5 opposite to ~~orientation~~ orientations of the flexible objects when erected.

1 34. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 32, wherein the
2 flexible objects are folded sheets, whereby a fold of each folded sheet lies in a trailing
3 manner over a respective subsequent folded sheet and the folded sheets obliquely
4 standing at said conveyance away from the guide stand on cut-edge sides.

1 35. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 33, wherein the
2 flexible objects are folded sheets, wherein the fold of each folded sheet in a trailing
3 manner lies over the respective subsequent folded sheet and the folded sheets which
4 stand obliquely on removal from the guide stand on corresponding cut-edge sides of the
5 folded sheets.

1 36. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 32, wherein ~~the~~
2 rotation of the flexible objects is effected by active braking or acceleration of the
3 flexible objects along at least one edge by independently driving each of a plurality of
4 conveying elements disposed upon the guide.

1 37. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 32, comprised of
2 contributing to ~~said~~ rotation by sequentially urging upper edges of the flexible objects
3 in a direction of said advance.

1 38. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 32, comprised of
2 contributing to ~~said~~ rotation by individually regulating movement of a plurality of
3 conveyors disposed along said guide to movingly engage the lower edges.

1 39. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 32, comprised of
2 contributing to ~~said~~ rotation by terminating said guide with an abutment oriented
3 outwardly from said guide in a direction of said advance.

1 40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, wherein a surface of the
2 guide comprises at least two sections with different surface inclinations.

1 41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, comprised of the guide
2 having a downward inclination along a direction of said advance of more than 30°.

1 42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, wherein the guide comprises
2 guide elements providing regional acceleration and braking of the flexible objects.

1 43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, comprised of said transfer
2 module having an abutment adjustably positionable relative to the guide.

1 44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, comprised of a separator
2 disposed in proximity to said guide to make said separation of individual flexible
3 objects or groups of the flexible objects.

1 45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, with the transfer module
2 comprising a plurality of movable elements conveying the flexible objects in a direction
3 of said advance.

1 46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, with the transfer module
2 comprising a transverse shift disposed to transversely displace the flexible objects
3 obliquely standing within a terminal portion of said guide.

1 47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, comprised of a retainer
2 disposed above the guide to act upon free edges of the objects.

1 48. (Withdrawn) A guide, comprising:
2 a path comprised of a first surface guiding leading lower edges of a
3 plurality of flat, flexible items in an imbricate array to a curved surface extending
4 downwardly from said first surface to an inclined surface, said path supporting the
5 lower edges of the items during progressive transformation in orientation from leading
6 to trailing lower edges of the items while the items advance from said first surface and
7 along said inclined surface; and
8 an abutment extending transversely above said path to obstructively
9 engage seriatim a lower portion of each of the items descending said inclined surface
10 and terminate said passage of each item along said inclined surface while the item is
11 obliquely erect with trailing lower edges.

1 49. (Withdrawn) The guide set forth in claim 48, comprised of a mechanism
2 positioned to remove the items from engagement with said abutment by grasping the
3 upper edges of a defined number of the items and sequentially lifting the items grasped
4 away from said inclined surface.

1 50. (Withdrawn) The guide set forth in claim 48, comprised of said inclined
2 surface exhibiting an inclination of more than thirty degrees from horizontal.

1 51. (Withdrawn) A guide, comprising:
2 an abutment; and

3 a path comprised of a first surface positioned to continuously receive
4 leading lower edges of a flow of flat, flexible items, and an intermediate surface leading
5 downwardly from said first surface to an inclined surface terminated by said abutment
6 with said path supporting the leading lower edges of the items while said flow advances
7 the flexible items from said first surface and contributes to progressive transformation
8 in orientation of the items within the flow from upper edges of the items trailing into a
9 formation with the items oriented obliquely erect at said abutment with the lower edges
10 trailing.

1 52. (Withdrawn) The guide of claim 51, comprising a conveyor positioned to
2 sequentially remove from said path, a defined number of the items embraced by said
3 abutment.

1 53. (Withdrawn) The guide of claim 51, with said intermediate surface
2 comprising a convex curve.

1 54. (Withdrawn) The guide of claim 51, with said intermediate surface
2 comprising a concave curve.

1 55. (Withdrawn) The guide of claim 51, comprised of said first surface disposed
2 to engage cut edges of the items while folded edges of the items trail the cut edges
3 along said first surface.

1 56. (Withdrawn) The guide of claim 51, comprised of said path engaging cut
2 edges of the items with folded edges of the items trailing the cut edges along said first
3 surface.

1 57. (Withdrawn) Guiding flexible, flat objects during product feed, comprised of:

2 receiving leading lower edges of a flow of flat flexible items in an
3 essentially regular imbricate formation onto a guide comprising a first surface leading
4 to a curved surface extending downwardly from said first surface, with upper edges of
5 the items trailing the lower edges during said flow along said first surface;

6 aligning the items by precipitating a shift in orientation of the items
7 within the flow as the items progress from said first surface via said curved surface and
8 along a downwardly inclined surface terminated by an abutment extending transversely
9 across said inclined surface causing an obstructive engagement of a lower portion of a
10 forwardmost of the items while the forwardmost item is obliquely erect with lower
11 edges of the items trailing the upper edges; and

12 removing a defined number of the items seriatim from said engagement.

1 58. (Withdrawn) Guiding, as set forth in clam 57, comprised of removing the
2 items from said engagement by individually engaging the upper edges and sequentially
3 lifting the items corresponding to the upper edges away from said inclined surface.

1 59. (Withdrawn) Guiding, as set forth in clam 57, comprised of providing said
2 inclined surface with an inclination of more than thirty degrees from horizontal.

1 60. (Withdrawn) Guiding flexible, flat objects during product feed, comprised of:
2 receiving cut leading edges of a flow of flat flexible items in an
3 essentially regular imbricate formation onto a guide comprising a first surface leading
4 to a curved surface extending downwardly from said first surface, with folded edges of
5 the items trailing the cut edges during said flow along said first surface;

6 aligning the items within the flow by allowing the flow to progress from
7 said first surface via said curved surface and along a downwardly inclined surface
8 terminated by an abutment extending transversely across said inclined surface causing
9 an obstructive engagement of a lower portion of a forwardmost of the items while the

10 forwardmost item is obliquely erect with folded edges of the items leading the cut edges;
11 and
12 removing a number of the items seriatim from said engagement.

1 61. (Withdrawn) Guiding, as set forth in clam 60, comprised of removing the
2 items from said engagement by sequentially grasping individual ones of the folded
3 edges and individually lifting the items corresponding to the folded edges grasped away
4 from said inclined surface.

1 62. (Withdrawn) Guiding, as set forth in clam 60, comprised of providing said
2 inclined surface with an inclination of more than thirty degrees from horizontal.